

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 AGR-05 COME-00 TRSE-00 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05

OMB-01 ACDA-05 SCCT-01 IO-11 LAB-04 SIL-01 OC-05

CCO-00 /107 W

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P 051400Z MAR 76

FM AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1148

INFO: RUFNPS/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1485

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL LYONS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL NICE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MARSEILLE 0098

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ECON, FR, IT

SUBJ: VIOLENCE IN "WINE WAR" OF MIDI

REF: MARSEILLE 0013

SUMMARY: DEATH OF CRS OFFICER AND WINEGROWER PLUS WOUNDING
OF APPROXIMATELY FORTY PARTICIPANTS IN MARCH 4 SHOOTOUT
DURING WINEGROWERS RIOT NEAR NARBONNE HAS SHOCKED MIDI AND
AGGRAVATED POLITICAL TENSIONS JUST PRIOR TO CANTONAL ELECTIONS.
TODAY'S LULL, DUE TO MOURNING, CONSULTATION OF PROTEST MOVEMENT
LEADERS AND REGROUPING OF WINEGROWER "COMMANDOS" MAY BE OF
SHORT DURATION. END SUMMARY.

1. STEADY INCREASE IN VIOLENT PROTEST ACTION BY WINEGROWERS

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AGAINST IMPORT OF ITALIAN WINE, E.E.C. "DISCRIMINATION",

ARREST OF COLLEAGUES AND FRENCH GOVERNMENT "INACTION" CULMINATED IN SHOOTING INCIDENT AFTERNOON OF MARCH 3 AT MONTREDON BRIDGE NEAR NARBONNE. IN EXCHANGE OF FIRE (SHOTGUNS, HUNTING RIFLES VERSUS GRENADES, SUBMACHINE GUNS) THAT REPORTEDLY LASTED ONE HOUR, COMMANDER OF CRS UNIT AND WINEGROWER KILLED. OF APPROXIMATELY FORTY WOUNDED, INCLUDING CRS, WINEGROWERS AND TRUCKDRIVERS, SEVERAL IN SERIOUS CONDITION.

2. LEADERS OF PROTEST MOVEMENT HAVE CALLED FOR DAY OF MOURNING MARCH 5. DIRECTOR OF FR-3 TELEVISION MONTPELLIER HAS INFORMED US THAT SEVERAL MEETINGS ALSO SCHEDULED IN DEPARTMENTS OF AUDE AND HERAULT TO DECIDE ON FUTURE ACTION. HE STATES PRIME PROBLEM AT PRESENT IS INFLUENCE OF "HOT HEADS" RECOMMENDING FURTHER VIOLENCE AS ONLY METHOD OF GAINING GROUND. HE FEELS DETAILS OF CLASH SOON TO BE MADE PUBLIC AND POSSIBLE DEATH OF SOME WOUNDED NOW HOSPITALIZED COULD "BLOW LID OFF" SITUATION.

3. ALTHOUGH INCIDENT CAUGHT REGIONAL PREFECTS IN PARIS DISCUSSING UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION WITH PRIME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT IS REACTING QUICKLY. REPORTS FROM MONTPELLIER AIRPORT MENTION ARRIVAL OF AIRLIFTED PERSONNEL, JEEPS AND ARMORED CARS OF GENDARMERIE MOBILE. PROPERTY DAMAGE THROUGHOUT LANGUEDOC REGION HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE INCLUDING TEN TAX COLLECTION OFFICES, A TELEVISION RELAY STATION, RAILROAD ROLLING STOCK, RAILS, AND SEVERAL HIGHWAY TOLLGATE STATIONS. MUCH OF THIS DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE WITH EXPLOSIVES.

4. EVENTS OF LAST TWENTY FOUR HOURS HAVE PRODUCED STRONG POLITICAL REACTIONS ALONG EXPECTED PARTY LINES. COMMUNIST DAILY "LA MARSEILLAISE" BLAMES GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR DEATHS, STATES THAT CRS FIRED FIRST AND ACCUSES TF 1 TELEVISION OF PRESENTING NEWS WITH GOVERNMENT BIAS "AS DURING WARTIME". DEPUTTE-MAIRE GASTON DEFFERRE'S "LE PROVENCAL" ASKS "WHO ARE THE GUILTY ONES" AND ANSWERS QUESTION BY BLAMING GOVERNMENT INACTION FOR SITUATION. CONSERVATIVE DAILY "LE MERIDIONAL" TELLS WINEGROWERS THAT THEIR CAUSE IS BECOMING UNPOPULAR DUE TO VIOLENCE AND WARNS THEM OF AGITATORS PLANTED IN THEIR RANKS. EDITORIALIST OF "LE MERIDIONAL" ALSO BLAMES GOVERNMENT FOR LACK OF FIRM POLICY PRIOR TO INCIDENT.

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COMMENT: NEXT TWENTY FOUR HOURS WILL BE CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING DIRECTION OF CRISIS. SOME REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS ARE SPECULATING ON POSTPONEMENT OF THIS WEEKEND'S CANTONAL ELECTIONS IN WINEGROWING AREAS TO AVOID FURTHER BLOODSHED. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT INCIDENT AT MONTREDON HAS INJECTED NOTE OF BITTERNESS AND TENSION INTO ALREADY STRAINED POLITICAL SITUATION. END COMMENT.
SIMPSON

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